CORE
Metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
Provided by SHAREOK repository

Horticulture Tips
November 2015

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

GARDEN TIPS FOR NOVEMBER!

David Hillock

Lawn & Turf

- Fertilize cool-season grasses like fescue with 1 pound nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
- Continue to mow fescue as needed at 2 inches and water during dry conditions.
- Control broadleaf winter weeds like dandelions (HLA-6601).
- Keep falling leaves off fescue to avoid damage to the foliage.

Tree & Shrub

- Prune deciduous trees in early part of winter. Prune only for structural and safety purposes.
- Wrap young, thin-barked trees with a commercial protective material to prevent winter sunscald.
- Apply dormant oil for scale infested trees and shrubs before temperatures fall below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Follow label directions.
- Continue to plant balled and burlapped and containerized trees.
- Watch for arborvitae aphids, which tolerate cooler temperatures in evergreen shrubs.

Flowers

- Tulips can still be successfully planted through the middle of November.
- Leave foliage on asparagus, mums, and other perennials to help insulate crowns from harsh winter conditions.
- Bulbs like hyacinth, narcissus and tulip can be potted in containers for indoor forcing.

Miscellaneous

- Leftover garden seeds can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer until next planting season. Discard seeds over 3 years old.
- Gather and shred leaves. Add to compost, use as mulch or till into garden plots.
- Clean and store garden and landscape tools. Coat with a light application of oil to prevent rusting. Drain fuel tanks, irrigation lines, and hoses. Bring hoses indoors.

Fruits & Nuts

- Delay pruning fruit trees until next February or March before bud break.
- Harvest pecans and walnuts immediately to eliminate deterioration of the kernel.

Ah, Nuts!

Shelley Mitchell

With the holidays approaching, you will soon be able to buy a variety of nuts in their shells. Buy a bag of them and put them in the freezer (to avoid a moth problem!) if you aren't going to do this activity right away. This activity is one that can be done in the classroom if you are a teacher or at home if your kids are stuck inside and can't go outside to play. This is a noisy activity that kids love.

Nutty Investigations– In this activity, you will determine which nuts have the toughest shells. You will need a variety of nuts still in their shells, as well as a 2 foot long section of a 4-inch diameter PVC pipe (one per group of kids), a lot of pennies (a full plastic cup or soup can per group), and either a plastic cup or soup can (something that will hold pennies and fits inside the PVC pipe). Place the nut to be tested on a solid surface (cement floor, sturdy table, etc.). Place the PVC pipe vertically over the nut. This will ensure that all nuts are tested from the same height. Drop the cup or can (with pennies inside) through the pipe, to try and break nuts and/or seeds (in their shells) open. Keep track of how many pennies it takes to break open walnuts, peanuts, pistachios (should be zero), acorns, cacao, pecans, etc. (Peach pits take a lot of pennies!!!). Make sure the experimenters repeat several times with each type of nut or seed, and compare results across groups. Reiterate the importance of keeping the trials 'fair' by using the same length of PVC pipe, counting all of the pennies, not slamming the soup cans down the tube, etc. Have the students make a chart of the results (with averages over multiple trials, depending upon the age of the kids).

Don't Bag It: Autumn Leaves

David Hillock

Bagging or burning leaves are two methods of leaf disposal that no longer fit today's environmental needs. Sending bagged leaves to the landfill uses precious space, and burning leaves contributes to air pollution and the risk of wildfire. Composting is the best way to deal with your fall tree leaves and produces a rich source of organic matter for your gardens.

Leaves can easily be composted at home. A compost pile is built by layering organic materials. Compost piles should be 3 to 4 feet wide and 3 to 4 feet high. This volume is large enough to allow the pile to heat as composting occurs and small enough to allow for easy turning. You can build bins for composting, but a simple pile works as well.

The layers of a compost pile include a mixture of green and brown materials to balance the ratio of carbon to nitrogen. Start your pile with 3 to 4 inches of dried organic matter, such as leaves or dried grass. Then pile on 3 to 4 inches of green material, such as kitchen vegetable scraps, grass clippings or green plant material. Try to maintain this even mixture of green to brown as you add material to the compost pile. As we start a compost pile, we also want to include a good source of nitrogen, either in the form of manure or fertilizer. If manure is available, add a layer 1 to 2 inches thick or apply one cup of fertilizer. You also want to get the compost started by providing

the microorganisms that will decompose the plant materials. Bacteria found in soil are the primary microorganisms that break down organic matter. Adding one inch of soil is sufficient to boost the microbes or you can purchase a commercial compost starter.

Kitchen scraps are great in the compost pile, but avoid meat scraps, fat and bones. Also keep pet wastes, diseased plants and weed seeds out of the compost pile.

The compost pile needs water and aeration to keep the microorganisms active. Keep the pile damp, but avoid over-watering, as this limits oxygen. The microorganisms need oxygen to break down the organic debris. Regular turning of the compost pile insures aeration and speeds the compost process.

You can learn more about leaf composting in the OSU Extension Leaflet L-252 – Don't Bag It: Leaf Composting.

Mulching Strawberries

David Hillock

Strawberry plants benefit from a winter covering of straw or similar mulch. Winter mulch reduces freeze and thaw cycles that can damage the plant crowns. Freezing and thawing of the soil also causes soil heaving, which can push plants out of the ground. This is especially a problem with shallow-rooted plants like strawberries. Heaving is also common in ornamental beds among plants like heuchera. Another benefit of winter mulch is to reduce the drying effects of the wind.

The best time to mulch strawberries is in early to mid-December, after several hard frosts. By this time the plants have developed cold hardiness. If you cover plants too early they may not become hardy enough to sustain winter temperatures.

Cover plants loosely to a depth of 3 to 4 inches across the entire row. A bale of straw should cover about 100 square feet. The straw needs to be removed as soon as plant growth begins in the spring, usually around mid-March. Winter mulch has the additional potential benefit of delaying plant development and flowering in the spring, which can help avoid spring frost injury.

Forcing Bulbs for the Holidays

David Hillock

We have been busy planting bulbs in the gardens, but we do not have to wait until spring to enjoy these blossoms. Many spring-flowering bulbs can be forced indoors for a colorful winter display. What better way to brighten up a winter day than with fresh flowers.

"Forcing" is the term used to describe the process that stimulates bulbs to bloom out of season. The easiest bulbs to force are Paperwhite Narcissus because they don't require chilling. Other

commonly forced bulbs include amaryllis, muscari and hyacinths. More challenging bulbs for forcing include colchicum and miniature iris. When selecting bulbs for forcing look for varieties that are specifically recommended for this purpose. Most bulbs require a chilling period or period of cold temperatures before they will bloom, but bulbs sold specifically for indoor forcing are pre-chilled, removing this step for the gardener.

Paperwhites are quick and easy to start and will bloom within four to six weeks. Start by selecting a container without any drainage holes. A clear glass vase can be used so you can see the roots of the bulbs growing, but many different types of containers can be used, as long as it is deep enough to hold about 3 inches of media.

When forcing bulbs, it is not necessary to use soil as the medium, though you may. It may be easier to use washed pea gravel or glass pebbles that can be purchased at craft stores. The stones or gravel will hold the bulbs in place as they grow. Fill the container with about 2 inches of growing medium. Then, place the paperwhite or other bulbs on top of the pebbles. For a nice display, set 7 or more bulbs close together so they almost touch. A large bunch of bulbs will be more dramatic. Set the bulbs so they are perfectly upright. Wiggle the bulbs down into the pebbles a little bit and then fill in around the bulbs with more pebbles. You do not want to completely bury the bulbs, instead, leave 1/2 to 1/3 of the bulb exposed.

Once you have the bulbs in place, add just enough water to the container to reach the base of the bulbs, but not touch the bulbs. Do not let the bulbs sit in water or they may rot. One of the reasons to use a glass container is that it is easy to see the level of the water. If you are using a solid container, just dig a small hole next to a bulb so you can see the water depth.

To start the rooting process, place your container in a cool room that gets low light or no light, such as a windowless room. Keep your container at low light levels until the roots begin to grow well and the shoots start showing - usually about 1 to 2 weeks. Keep an eye on the water level and refill as necessary to keep the level just below the bottom of the bulbs.

Once you have good root growth, move your bulbs into a warmer bright, sunny window and watch them grow! Once the bulbs begin to flower, move them out of direct sun so your blooms will last longer. Your home will be filled with beautiful flowers and the refreshing aroma of spring in the middle of winter. Plant batch after batch to keep flowers blooming all winter long. Paperwhite containers make beautiful centerpieces for the table during the holidays, and are also great to give as holiday bouquets. Or force paperwhites with your children to create unique gifts for their teachers or grandparents.

Under-utilized Conifers

David Hillock

There are many plants to choose from for the landscape. Here is a highlight a few under-utilized conifers for Oklahoma. The first one is a beautiful tree once thought to be extinct, the Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). The tree had

been known only from fossil records until 1944, when living specimens were located in China. It has since become a popular landscape tree for its tall and fast growth, delicate foliage and colorful bark. The foliage is a bright green and turns red-brown in the fall.

Another deciduous beauty is the Pond Cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*). Related to the Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), Pond Cypress has a narrower growth habit seldom exceeding 15 feet in diameter. Pond Cypress also tends to have fewer knees and less buttressing than Bald Cypress. Yet it can still reach great heights of up to 80 feet. The tight form allows many homeowners to use Pond Cypress where Bald Cypress would be too wide. The foliage is very soft and turns a coppery-orange color in fall. In a large landscape, Pond Cypress looks beautiful planted in mass, but the tall, tight form also makes an excellent single specimen tree.

Finally, an evergreen conifer, the China Fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*). The spiky needle-like leaves are arranged in a very interesting spiral around the stems with an upward arch. On young trees, the brown bark exfoliates in strips, revealing a reddish-orange inner bark, which is quite attractive. The tree itself has the typical, pyramidal shape of many evergreens, but the branches of older trees droop somewhat. The trees tend to be multi-stemmed and sucker up from around the base. You can remove the suckers periodically to maintain a cleaner look. The unique appearance of this tree draws a great deal of attention in the landscape.

70th Annual Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show

Justin Quetone Moss

The 70th Annual Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show will occur on December 1-2, 2015 at the Oklahoma State University Wes Watkins Center. You can register as an attendee or exhibitor by visiting http://www.otrf.net/ and choosing either the online or mail-in registration link. On December 1, there will be five educational tracks including: golf course management, sports field management, lawn care operators, sod production, and turf mechanics. On December 2, there will be a pesticide continuing education general session. For both days of the conference, CEUs will be available for Oklahoma pesticide applicators in categories 3A (turf and ornamental) and 10 (demonstration and research). The trade show will feature 40 turf industry companies and representatives from around the state and region. The event will also be available for in-service credit for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension personnel.

Master Gardener Corner

Horticulture Industries Show (HIS) - January 8-9, 2016. This year HIS will be held at the Tulsa Community College Northeast Campus and all Master Gardeners (MG) are invited to attend. If you are a returning MG you can receive continuing education hours that will count towards the minimum 20 hours you need to keep active member status. Remember, however, that

only the time actually spent in class counts as training received. Travel and in-between times do not count.

Though we offer a MG/Public Garden session, you may also choose from any other session offered during the conference. There are 7 commodity groups represented during HIS, all conducting seminars, workshops, and business meetings. You may choose from any of the following groups – Vegetable, Fruit, Sustainable Ag, Farmer's Market, Master Gardener/Public Garden, Christmas Tree, and Oklahoma Agritourism.

The conference theme is "*Building Soils for a Secure Future*" with Keynote Speaker Jeff Moyer, Interim Executive Director, Rodale Institute.

Speakers and topics for the MG/Public Garden session include:

- Lou Anella, *On-Demand Greenhouse Irrigation*
- Mike Anderson, *Gardening and Microorganisms: Our Little Workhorses*
- John Haase, *Soil and Soilless Mix Interface Problems*
- Christina Roberson, *The Oklahoma Master Naturalists Volunteer Program*
- Justin Moss, *Building Fertilizer/Soil Nutrient Programs for Lawns and Landscapes*
- Dustin Harris, *Organic Fertilizers for Lawns*
- Qing Luo, *Reuse Material in Landscape Design: A Creative Path to Sustainability*
- David Hillock, *2016 Oklahoma Proven Plants*
- Lane Greer, *What's Wrong with Your Pot? A Look at Potting Mixes*
- Kristen Baum, *Monarch Butterflies: Relevant Conservation Considerations* and *Native Bees: Best Practices for Providing Habitat*
- Doug Hamilton, *Vermicomposting*
- Joshua Campbell, *Landscape/Turf Water Conservation and Soil Management*
- Magdalena Vinson, *Gardening in an Urban Setting*

Registration information will available soon. To keep up with latest information about the conference go to http://calendars.oces.okstate.edu/extension-events/oklahoma-and-arkansas-horticulture-industries-conference.

This should be another great conference, hope to see you there!

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Horticulture Industries Conference and Show
January 8 and 9, 2016
Tulsa Community College, NE Campus
http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/HIS

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu.